

## **“The Lamb is the answer” (John 1:29-42)**

**“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.” I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).**

Have you ever done anything wrong? Ever? Have you ever been and felt guilty? May be recently? Have you ever been caught when you were guilty? What did you do? What did you want to do?

I think when we look at children we can see ourselves. What do children usually do when they have done something wrong and are guilty? “It wasn’t me, it was him”. In our home it sounds like: “It wasn’t me, it was Daniels. No, it wasn’t me, it was Dāvids! Or, no, it was Betija!”

Does it sound familiar? We, adults, are the same. When we are guilty we want to put our guilt to someone else. It wasn’t my fault, it was yours! It wasn’t me, it was that other person, or circumstances, etc.

If you can recognize yourself as someone who doesn’t like to feel guilty and would like to put your blame on someone else, then I have a very good news for you. Very good news, indeed! There is someone you can put all your guilt on.

Do you know who he is? That’s right, the Lamb of God. Jesus Christ. He is the answer to your problem of feeling guilty for everything that you have ever done wrong, and for everything that you have failed to do.

How does it work, we may wonder? And why is Jesus called the Lamb of God? As one of you once said, seeing and hearing our emphasis on the Lamb, non-Christians can easily conclude that we practice some sort of animal worship.

By the way, do you know where there is a depiction of the Lamb in this Church? That’s right, on this beautiful stain glass window.

So, what is this Lamb business about? We can answer and explain it to others in four parts. The Lamb in the Old Testament. The Lamb in the New Testament. The Lamb today. The Lamb in the age to come.

First, the Lamb in the Old Testament. This helps to understand why John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God. As you know at Mount Sinai God not only gave to His people the 10 Commandments, but also established the Divine Service, or worship.

Their worship wasn't that different from ours. The purpose of the worship was the same, so that God could be among us, to grant us forgiveness and to bless us. How did it happen?

God Yahweh Himself instructed His people what to do. First, they had to come to the appointed place and bring a sacrificial animal, often a lamb. Then they laid their hands on the head of this sacrificial animal, confessing their sins and symbolically transferring their sins to the lamb.

Then, the animal was slaughtered, its blood poured out at the altar, parts of the animal were burned and parts of it eaten as a holy meal in God's presence. Fine, but what was that all about? It is simple.

God Himself wanted to grant His people forgiveness of all their sins, and He also wanted to teach that forgiveness is always a costly gift. Remember, Paul wrote to Romans that wages of sin is death.

What God was teaching His people with these rituals was that sin leads into death. That we can receive forgiveness from God, but someone else needs to take our sins away and to receive what we deserve, sacrificing their life for us. That was the logic of their worship.

And once their sins were forgiven, God blessed their meals in His presence, and so people left forgiven and blessed by the Lord. This is how the Old Testament worship was preparing God's people for *the* Lamb of God, who will take away the sin of the world!

First part was the Lamb in the Old Testament, the second part is the Lamb in the New Testament. Of course, the life of a sacrificial animal is in no way an adequate exchange for human life.

If you are guilty in something that leads to capital punishment, you can't just say: "Take this animal instead of me." But it is possible, that someone comes and says: "It wasn't your fault, it was my fault, I'll take your place. You are free to go."

This is what Jesus did. He came to take your place. To take all your sins. To receive the wages that sin deserves. To receive them in your place. He, the Son of God, offered Himself as a sacrifice for all your sins. Once and for all.

Now we get to the third part. The Lamb of God today. When do we say, or sing these words “the Lamb of God who take away the sin of the world”? That’s right, before the Holy Communion?

There is something wonderful going on here. This is where God’s solution to all our sins and guilt lies. The Lamb is the answer. When you came to the Divine Service what do you bring with you? That’s right ... your sins.

Then you come in and you lay your hands on the head of Jesus, and He takes all your sins from you. You bring your sins and guilt here, you put it on Jesus, and He takes your place, as the Lamb provided by God Himself.

Then, in exchange He gives you forgiveness of all your sins. That’s how it is done. If someone takes your place, you are not guilty anymore, all your sins are forgiven. Gone. This is what the Lamb of God does for you.

But there is more. Much more. Maybe you remember, that in the Old Testament it is repeatedly emphasized that the life of the flesh is in the blood. This is why the blood of sacrifices was poured out, to show that the wages of sin is death.

The life of Jesus was in His blood, which He shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins. But Jesus wasn’t simply a man. He was also true God. His blood was blood of true God. What does this mean? That in His blood there was not only life, but eternal life.

Now, do you see where we are going? What do we receive in the Holy Communion? We receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. In the Sacrament we eat and drink ... eternal life. Literary.

We receive it from God Himself. The Lamb of God Himself hosts this sacred meal and He Himself gives us to eat and to drink forgiveness and eternal life. Can you stop marveling at this wonder?!

Do you see what it does for you? Here you receive God’s gift of forgiveness and good conscience. It’s true, we will keep sinning till the end of our lives. But what does the Lamb of God do? He sets us free.

You don’t need to blame anyone else in your sins. You don’t need to deny that you have sinned anymore. You are free to lay your hands on the head of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to confess that, yes, I am a sinner and I have sinned, and to transfer all your sins and guilt to Jesus. And He will gladly take your sins and in exchange will give you His forgiveness.

Have you failed as a parent? Do you feel guilty? Have you failed as a spouse? Do you feel guilty? Have you been dishonest in your work and business? Do you feel guilty? Have you not done what you were supposed? Have you been indifferent to Christ? Have you not been good enough? Do you feel guilty?

Then here are good news for you. Lay your hands on the Lamb of God, confess freely your sins and anything what worries you, and put your guilt on Him, and He will gladly take it from you. You are forgiven. You are free. Forever.

This is what Christian freedom is about. The Lamb of God has taken your place, your sins, and gives you good conscience and joy to live a new life. You are forgiven. Now come and join into the holy meal of the Lamb, eat and drink forgiveness and eternal life.

We are left with the last, fourth part. The Lamb in the age to come. This one is the most beautiful one. Just open the book of Revelation. The Lamb of God is the main character there. But now He is very different.

Just listen to a few verses: “I saw a Lamb standing... with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” (Rev 5:6) Seven horns, absolute power. Seven eyes, the fullness of God’s Spirit.

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:12) He is the One to whom all authority is given in heaven and on earth.

He is the Judge of the world. And how good is that! Just imagine, if He invites you to put your sins on Him, and He Himself takes them away, how will He judge you on the Last Day? “My dear child, you are forgiven, come and receive the Kingdom that is prepared for you!”

This is how John the apostle recorded the vision given to Him: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” (Rev 21:1a, 22-23)

This is where we all are heading. Just think about it, what life awaits you, if this new heaven and this new earth and this new Jerusalem are ruled by the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who gave His life, so that only He could have you with Him.

The last thing. What did Andrew do once he realized who Jesus was? What did Phillip do a few verses later? They run and told their friends and relatives. We have found Him! The Lamb of God. Our Saviour! Jesus Christ.

He is the answer to all our problems. He takes away all our sins and guilt. He gives us good conscience and new life. Come and see for yourself!

Jesus has found you. He knows you and you know Him. More, He knows that He will see you in His Kingdom. For no one can snatch you out of His hand.

And while we are still here, waiting to meet the victorious Lamb of God, let’s do as much as we can to bring at least a few more people with us. So that there is even more joy here and in the age to come.

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and souls in Jesus Christ. Amen.